

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-12 CIAE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /079 W
-----022921 311156Z /44

R 311125Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5477
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION USNATO
DIA WASHDC
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 23852

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: A COMMUNIST PROTESTOR TALKS

SUMMARY: "THE PCF MADE A TREMENDOUS MISTAKE IN 1978,
IT MISSED A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY." NOT THE WORDS OF A
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POLITICAL ANALYST, BUT THOSE OF GEORGES PLANAS, COMMU-
NIST MAYOR OF ELNE AND PCF POWER IN THE PYRENEES-
ORIENTALES. METALWORKER BY PROFESSION, NOW A SCULPTOR
IN SCRAP METAL WITH HIS OWN BOUTIQUE, PLANAS IS ANY-
THING BUT AN INTELLECTUAL AND HAS NEVER MET JEAN ELLEIN-
STEIN OR LOUIS ALTHUSSER. NONETHELESS, HE IS A "CONTES-
TATAIRE" (DISSENTER) IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD AND PO-

TENTIALLY MORE TROUBLESOME FOR PCF NATIONAL LEADERSHIP THAN ANY OF HIS MORE ILLUSTRIOUS COMPATRIOTS. UNKNOWN OUTSIDE OF THE PYRENEES-ORIENTALES, PLANAS PULLED NO PUNCHES IN DESCRIBING THE PCF DILEMMA TO EMBOFF DURING A RECENT PRIVATE SESSION IN ELNE. END SUMMARY.

1. TYPICAL, YES...: GEORGES PLANAS IS THE EPITOME OF THE SUCCESSFUL COMMUNIST MAYOR. HE FIRST CAMPAIGNED, UNSUCCESSFULLY, FOR PUBLIC OFFICE IN 1946. IN 1953, HE BECAME ONE OF TWO COMMUNISTS ON THE ELNE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL. BY 1965, HE WAS MAYOR IN A PCF/RADICAL COALITION WHICH WON A NARROW VICTORY, BUT BY 1971 WAS ABLE TO ACCUMULATE 70 PERCENT OF THE VOTE ON THE FIRST ROUND. IN 1977, PLANAS WAS SO ENTRENCHED THAT HE WAS ELECTED ON THE FIRST ROUND WITHOUT OPPOSITION.

2. BUT VERY UNORTHODOX: BECAUSE OF HIS ELECTORAL SUCCESS (ELNE, 6000 POPULATION, IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PCF CITY IN THE DEPARTMENT) AND HIS 30-PLUS YEARS OF MILITANT ACTIVITY AT THE GRASS ROOTS LEVEL, PLANAS IS PROBABLY THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THE PYRENEES-ORIENTALES FEDERATION. HE IS NOT AFRAID TO USE THAT POWER. IN PREPARATION FOR THE MARCH LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, FOR EXAMPLE, HE FORCED THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TO BACK DOWN IN ITS PLANS FOR REPLACING SITTING PCF DEPUTY ANDRE TOURNE WITH A YOUNGER MAN -- TOURNE, SAID PLANAS, WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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STILL THE BEST MAN FOR THE JOB AND THE ONLY ONE FOR WHOM HE WOULD CAMPAIGN.

3. THE PARTY GAVE IN, APPARENTLY UNABLE TO CONTEST PLANAS IN HIS SMALL FIEFDOM ON THE SPANISH FRONTIER. BUT EVEN THOUGH TOURNE WON RE-ELECTION HANDILY, LOCAL VICTORY IN NO WAY TEMPERED GEORGES PLANAS' DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE NATIONAL FAILURE OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT. "WE (THE PCF) MISSED A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY IN 1978, ONE WHICH IS NOT LIKELY TO REPRODUCE ITSELF FOR YEARS TO COME." FOR PLANAS, THE COMMUNIST PARTY SQUANDERED ALMOST OVERNIGHT THE HARD-WON GAINS OF THE LAST SIX YEARS, BETRAYING THE WORKING CLASS IT HAD PLEDGED TO PROTECT AND COMMITTING "THE TERRIBLE ERROR OF LEAVING THE RIGHT IN POWER."

4. A QUESTION OF BUILDING CONFIDENCE: REFERRING TO HIS OWN EXPERIENCE, PLANAS IS CONVINCED THAT THE PCF CAN ONLY COME TO POWER IN STEPS. THERE IS A LATENT FEAR OF THE COMMUNISTS, JUSTIFIED BY PCF ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST, WHICH WILL ONLY BE OVERCOME BY PARTICIPATING IN GOVERNMENT, BY SHOWING THAT COMMUNISTS ARE BOTH CAPABLE AND

TRUSTWORTHY. THE COMMON PROGRAM AND THE UNION OF THE
LEFT HAD BEGUN THAT PROCESS, MOST NOTABLY BY INSTALLING
PCF REPRESENTATION IN NUMEROUS MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS.
THE SOCIALIST PARTY HAD FINALLY BEEN PULLED BACK INTO
THE LEFT AFTER ITS "SFIO DISASTER" -- THE PS CERTAINLY
RETAINS TROUBLESOME SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC TENDENCIES, SAYS
PLANAS, BUT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, TO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 23852

FIND A BETTER ALLY IN THE FRENCH CONTEXT.

5. UNFORTUNATELY, THE PCF CHOSE TO ABANDON A WINNING STRATEGY, "FLEEING IN THE FACE OF POWER AND LOSING CONFIDENTIAL

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ENORMOUS CREDIBILITY." EVEN NOW, THE PARTY CONTINUES TO DISTANCE ITSELF EVEN FURTHER FROM THE UNION OF THE LEFT, SUBSTITUTING THE UNION OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE WHICH IS AT BEST A 20-30 YEAR PROPOSITION. PLANAS HIMSELF IS COMMITTED TO DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE, WITHIN THE PARTY, TO CONVINCE THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE ERROR OF ITS WAYS AND WILL BE ACTIVE IN PREPARATIONS FOR THE 23RD CONGRESS. THE FUTURE IS NOT ROSY, HE ADMITS. PCF LEADERS SEEM COMPLETELY LOCKED IN ON THEIR NEW COURSE, THE PS IS EXTREMELY CHARY OF FUTURE ASSOCIATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS, AND EVEN WITHIN THE PCF STRUCTURE, "IT WILL BE DIFFICULT, PERHAPS IMPOSSIBLE, TO RECONSTRUCT THE PREVIOUS LEVEL OF MILITANT COMMITMENT." ARE THERE OTHERS WHO SUPPORT HIS VIEWPOINT? PLANAS ONLY ANSWERS, "I HOPE SO."

6. COMMENT: IS GEORGES PLANAS THE ABERRATION OR ARE THERE TENS OR HUNDREDS OF OTHER PARTY CADRE WHO SHARE HIS CONCERNS? VERTICAL COMPARTMENTALIZATION IS SO EFFECTIVE IN THE PCF THAT NOT EVEN HE KNOWS THE ANSWER. LIKE MOST PCF MEMBERS, PLANAS HAS A STRONG SENSE OF PARTY PATRIOTISM, NURTURED DURING LONG YEARS OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE, WHICH OBLIGES HIM TO PLAY BY THE RULES. HE WAS IN FAVOR OF OPENING THE PARTY PRESS TO DISSENTING OPINIONS, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY REFUSED TO USE THE BOURGEOIS PRESS TO EXPRESS HIS VIEWS; HE DEPENDS WHOLLY ON THE THREE MONTH DEBATE BEFORE THE CONGRESS TO ARGUE HIS CASE. THE CHANCES ARE SLIM THAT GEORGES PLANAS WILL INFLUENCE IN ANY WAY THE 23RD CONGRESS, BUT HE IS LIVING PROOF THAT THE PCF IS NOT TOTALLY IMMUNE TO THE WINDS OF CHANGE, ALBEIT AT THE FAR FLUNG REACHES OF THE EMPIRE.

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